CLAIMS

We claim:

1.   A menu emulation method comprising:

    encoding a form-submit element with a menu-item description and an associated graphical icon denoting a selectable menu;

    disposing said encoded form-submit element in network distributable markup and distributing said markup to a content browser; and,

    responsive to a selection of one of said menu-item description and said graphical icon, further distributing over said network to said content browser a graphical menu-structure encoded in at least one additional form-submit element.

2.   The menu emulation method of claim 1, wherein said encoding step comprises:

    embedding in a markup representation of said form-submit element, a network reference to a server configured to produce enhanced graphical menu images, said network reference comprising a textual menu-item description and a menu type.

3.   The menu emulation method of claim 1, wherein said disposing step comprises:

    embedding said encoded form-submit element in network distributable markup defining a table cell in a table;

    formatting said table cell with a background color matching the background colors of other table cells in said table; and,

    distributing said markup, upon request, to a content browser.

1   4.   The method of claim 3, wherein said step of further distributing a graphical menu-

2   structure comprises:

3   responsive to a selection of said encoded form-submit element embedded in said

4   table cell, assembling a graphical menu-structure encoded in at least one additional

5   form-submit element;

6   replacing said encoded form-submit element embedded in said table cell with

7   said graphical menu-structure; and,

8   formatting said table cell with a background color which differs from the

9   background colors of other table cells in said table.

1   5.   The menu emulation method of claim 1, wherein said disposing step comprises:

2   embedding said encoded form-submit element in network distributable markup

3   defining a table cell in a table row in a table;

4   further embedding other encoded form-submit elements in other table cells in

5   said table row; and,

6   formatting each said table cell with a first background color.

1   6.   The menu emulation method of claim 1, wherein said further distributing step

2   comprises:

3   detecting a selection of one of said encoded form-submit elements in said row;

4   responsive to said detection, assembling a graphical menu-structure encoded in

5   at least one additional form-submit element;

6   replacing said one of said encoded form-submit elements with said graphical

7   menu-structure; and,

8   formatting a table cell containing said graphical menu-structure with a

9   background color which differs from the background colors of said other table cells in

10   said table row.

1   7.   The method of claim 4, wherein said assembling step comprises generating a

2   graphical display of a menu-structure, said display comprising at least one of a textual

3   menu action, a graphically selectable menu action, and a nested menu structure.

1   8.   The method of claim 6, further comprising:

2   preserving state information for each encoded form-submit element; and,

3   upon detecting a selection of one of said encoded form-submit elements,

4   identifying graphical menu-structures in said markup from said state information, and

5   removing said graphical menu-structures from said markup except for a graphical

6   menu-structure assembled for said selected encoded form-submit element.

1   9.   A menu emulation method comprising:

2   serving markup to a plurality of content browsers, said markup comprising at

3   least one form-based input element encapsulating a reference to a composite image of

4   menu text and a graphical icon, said icon denoting a selectable menu;

5   receiving an indication from at least one of said content browsers that said form-

6   based input element has been selected; and,

7   responsive to said receipt of said indication, further serving to said at least

8   content browser a graphical image of a menu structure, said graphical image

9   comprising at least one form-based input element encapsulating a reference to a

10   composite image of menu text and a graphical icon, said icon denoting at least one of a

11   menu action and a selectable menu.

1   10.   A machine readable storage having stored thereon a computer program for

2   performing menu emulation, said computer program comprising a routine set of

3   instructions for causing the machine to perform the steps of:

4   serving markup to a plurality of content browsers, said markup comprising at

5   least one form-based input element encapsulating a reference to a composite image of

6   menu text and a graphical icon, said icon denoting a selectable menu;

7   receiving an indication from at least one of said content browsers that said form-

8   based input element has been selected; and,

9   responsive to said receipt of said indication, further serving to said at least

10   content browser a graphical image of a menu structure, said graphical image

11   comprising at least one form-based input element encapsulating a reference to a

12   composite image of menu text and a graphical icon, said icon denoting at least one of a

13   menu action and a selectable menu.

1   11.   A network distributable emulated menu comprising:

2   a plurality of composite images, each said image comprising menu text and a

3   graphical icon, said icon denoting a selectable menu;

4   a plurality of selectable form-based input elements, each said element

5 encapsulating one of said composite images; and,

6   a graphical image of a menu structure, said graphical image comprising at least

7 one form-based input element encapsulating a reference to a composite image of menu

8 text and a graphical icon, said icon denoting at least one of a menu action and a

9 selectable menu.

1 12.   The emulated menu of claim 11, further comprising a plurality of table cells, each

2 cell containing one of said selectable form-based input elements.

1 13.   The emulated menu of claim 11, wherein said menu structure comprises at least

2 one of a textual menu action, a graphically selectable menu action, and a nested menu

3 structure.